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HOW TO COOK THE BURBOT

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INTRODUCTION

The burbot (Lota maculosa) is found in the lakes and sluggish streams of the New England, and the Great Lakes region. It is available during most of the year, and the flavor of the flesh is mild but distinctive.

This fresh-water cousin of the cod looking somewhat like a catfish is olive green, crisscrossed with black lines on the back and sides, and dusky yellow beneath. The burbot is variously known as lawyer, ling, fresh-water eelpout, or cusk, and long-tailed catfish. The large liver contains an oil similar in vitamin potency to cod-liver oil.

CLEANING AND DRESSING BURBOT

When you purchase a burbot, your fish dealer will skin it, if you wish, removing head, tail, fins, and viscera. A whole, pan-dressed fish remains of about half the original weight.

To fillet or bone a burbot, cut down with a sharp knife through the flesh on the back, beginning at the point where the head was cut off. When the knife reaches the backbone, turn it flat and cut the flesh along the backbone to the tail. Lift off the entire side of the fish in one piece. Turn the fish over and loosen the flesh from the other side in the same way. The rib bones may be scooped out with one sweep of the knife, after the fillets have been separated from the skeleton. The weight of the fillets is about 25 percent of that of the whole fish.

Whole or filleted, there are many desirable ways to prepare this lean-meated fish. Some laboratory tested recipes follow:

Fried Burbot, Indian Style

3 pounds burbot (whole, pan-dressed fish)
1/2 cup yellow corn meal
1/2 cup all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
3 tablespoons vegetable shortening or drippings

Cut fish in portions for serving and roll in corn meal, flour, salt, and pepper. Melt fat in shallow frying pan and brown fish on both sides. Reduce heat and continue cooking until done — about 15 minutes. Serve hot, and garnish with lemon wedges.

Burbot Swirls with Mock Hollandaise Sauce

2 pounds burbot fillets
1-1/2 carrots, diced
1 small onion, sliced
1 teaspoon salt
6 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine
2 tablespoons flour
3 egg yolks, beaten
1/2 cup milk
1/2 cup fish liquor
1-1/2 teaspoons lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon lemon rind, grated
1/4 teaspoon pepper
Minced parsley

Place carrots and onions in 1 quart of cold water with 2/3 teaspoon of salt; bring to a boil. Sprinkle each fillet with salt and pepper, roll up lengthwise, and fasten with toothpicks. Place in the boiling water, cover, and simmer 10 minutes or until tender.

For the sauce, melt butter or fortified margarine in double boiler, and stir in the flour. Add the egg yolks combined with the milk. Add 1/2 cup of the fish liquor, lemon juice, lemon rind, remaining 1/3 teaspoon salt and pepper. Cook over boiling water until thickened, stirring constantly. Pour sauce over fish, garnish with parsley, and serve.

Baked Burbot Creole

3 pounds burbot (whole, pan-dressed fish)
1 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine
1 small onion, minced
1/2 clove garlic, minced
2 cups stewed tomatoes
1 bay leaf
Dash cayenne pepper

Wipe fish with a damp cloth and cut into portions for serving. Sprinkle with salt, and place in a shallow, greased baking-pan. Melt the butter or fortified margarine, and brown the onion and garlic lightly. Add the tomatoes, bay leaf, and cayenne pepper. Let the mixture come to a boil and pour it over the burbot. Bake at 375° F. for 1 hour. Serve hot with steamed rice.

Baked Stuffed Burbot with Almond Dressing

2 – 2½ pound burbot (whole, pan-dressed fishes)
3 slices bacon or salt pork

Dressing

4 cups dry bread crumbs
3 tablespoons onion, finely chopped
3/4 cup celery, cut fine
6 tablespoons melted butter or fortified margarine
3/4 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1 teaspoon sage
1/2 cup toasted almonds (may be omitted if desired)

Cook celery and onion in the butter or fortified margarine for a few minutes. Mix the other ingredients, and add to the butter mixture.

Remove backbone of fish, if desired. Wipe burbot with a damp cloth. Run a long-bladed knife along the backbone of the fishes about 5 inches from the vent up to the tails, so that the flesh at the tails will separate and lay flat. Salt lightly both inside and out. Lay one fish in a greased, shallow baking-pan with the back of the fish against the bottom of the pan. Cover the fish with the dressing, and top with the remaining fish so that the inside of it is against the dressing. Cut three 2-inch gashes across the back of the top fish; lay the slices of bacon or salt pork over it, and bake in a pre-heated oven for 1 hour at 375° F.

Burbot Fish Flakes

1-1/2 pounds burbot, (whole, pan-dressed fish)
1/2 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1-1/2 cups hot water

Wipe fish with a damp cloth and cut in portions for serving. Season fish with salt and pepper, and place on a rack in a pan. Add the water, cover and steam about 12 minutes. Drain, and reserve stock for use in soups or sauces. Remove fish from bones and flake with a fork. Yield: 2 cups flaked fish.

Burbot Flake Pie

2 cups burbot fish flakes
3 tablespoons butter or fortified margerine
1 sliced onion
3 tablespoons flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
1/2 cup milk
1-1/2 cups fish stock (saved after steaming fish for flakes)
1 cup cooked carrots and potatoes, diced
1 teaspoon Worcestershire Sauce

To make crust, use one-half of any good recipe for standard pastry.

Melt butter or fortified margarine, add sliced onion, and cook three minutes. Stir in flour, salt, pepper; and, when well blended, slowly add milk and stock. Cook, stirring constantly, until mixture thickens. Add fish flakes, vegetables, and Worcestershire Sauce; pour in greased, 1-1/2 quart casserole. Cover with pastry, pressing edges of pie crust to the rim of the dish, and bake in a pre-heated oven 450° F. 12 to 15 minutes.

Burbot Loaf

2 cups burbot fish flakes
1 to 1¼ cups soft bread crumbs
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon pepper
1/2 teaspoon dry mustard
2 tablespoons melted butter or fortified margarine
1/2 cup milk
2 eggs, slightly beaten

Combine the crumbs with the seasonings and butter. Add the milk and the slightly beaten eggs; mix well. Add the flaked burbot to the egg mixture. Turn into a shallow, oiled baking-pan, shape into a loaf, and bake in a moderate oven (350° F.) about 45 minutes or until firm and browned. Serve plain, garnished with lemon sections, or with a sauce.

Burbot Hash

1-1/2 cups burbot fish flakes
2-1/2 cups cooked potatoes, diced
2 tablespoons onion, grated
2 tablespoons parsley, minced
2 tablespoons pork drippings
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon paprika
2 teaspoons Worcestershire Sauce
2 to 3 tablespoons rich milk or evaporated milk

Mix fish, potatoes, and seasonings; moisten with milk. Sauté in pork drippings, stirring until heated; pat into a cake and cook until well browned underneath. Fold, and turn out like an omelet.

Borsch Salad

3/4 cup burbot fish flakes
1 package lemon flavored gelatin
1 cup hot water
3/4 cup beet juice
3 tablespoons vinegar
1/2 teaspoon salt
2 teaspoons onion juice or grated onion
1 tablespoon prepared horse-radish
1/4 cup cooked beets, diced
3/4 cup celery, diced

Dissolve gelatin in hot water. Add beet juice, vinegar, salt, onion, and horse-radish. Chill. When slightly thickened, fold in celery, beets, and fish. Turn into mold and chill until firm. Unmold on crisp salad greens, and garnish with mayonnaise or sour cream.

Fish and Potato Salad

1-1/2 cups burbot fish flakes
1-1/2 cups hot potatoes, diced
2 hard cooked eggs, chopped
3/4 cup celery, diced
2 tablespoons onion, minced
2 tablespoons pimiento, diced
2 tablespoons sweet pickle, chopped
1 teaspoon salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 tablespoons vinegar
1 cup mayonnaise or cooked salad dressing

Mix thoroughly and chill. Serve on lettuce, and garnish with slices of hard boiled egg.

Cream of Burbot Soup

1-1/2 pounds burbot, (whole, pan-dressed fish)
1/2 cups carrots, chopped
1/2 cup celery, diced
1 slice onion
2-1/2 cups water
1 small onion, grated
4 tablespoons butter or fortified margarine
4 tablespoons flour
2 teaspoons salt
1/8 teaspoon pepper
2 cups milk
1 tablespoon pimiento, chopped

Wash the fish and cut into portions for serving. Place the first five ingredients in a kettle with a tight-fitting cover; steam for about 12 minutes. Drain, and save stock for soup-base. Remove bones from fish, and flake fish with a fork. Melt butter, and saute' grated onion in butter. Combine flour and seasonings; blend with butter and onion. Gradually add milk and stock. Cook until slightly thickened, stirring constantly. Add flaked fish and pimiento; bring to the boiling point. Serve hot.

BURBOT FLAKE SANDWICH FILLINGS

Burbot and Olive Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1 tablespoon stuffed olives, diced
1 tablespoon mayonnaise

Burbot and Sweet Pickle Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1 tablespoon sweet pickle, diced
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
Pinch of salt

Burbot and Mustard Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1/2 teaspoon prepared mustard
1-1/2 teaspoons mayonnaise
Pinch of salt

Burbot and Onion Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1/2 teaspoon onion, grated
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
Pinch of salt

Burbot and Catsup Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1 tablespoon catsup
1/2 teaspoon mayonnaise
Pinch of salt

Burbot and Horse-radish Spread

2 tablespoons burbot fish flakes
1/2 teaspoon prepared horse-radish
1 tablespoon mayonnaise
Pinch of salt

Method for above spreads:

Mix all ingredients together and spread on a slice of buttered bread. Top with a lettuce leaf and another slice of buttered bread.

Each recipe is enough for one generous sandwich.

LUNCHEON MENUS

Cream of burbot soup
Crackers
Raw carrot and cabbage salad
Whole grain bread and butter or fortified margarine
Baked apple with cream
Milk

Borsch salad
Scalloped potatoes
Rye bread and butter or fortified margarine
Gingerbread
Milk

DINNER MENUS

Baked stuffed burbot with almond dressing
Baked potatoes
Buttered Beets
Raw carrot and celery strips
Whole grain bread and butter or fortified margarine
Lemon snow pudding
Coffee, tea, or milk

Burbot swirls with mock hollandaise sauce
Parsley potatoes
Buttered kale
Waldorf salad
Cornbread and butter or fortified margarine
Butterscotch meringue pie
Coffee, tea, or milk